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# *Stories of Resilience*

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***Women Entrepreneurs' Stories of Resilience Amidst Covid 19***

## Acknowledgement

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## Martha Kataike



### Integrated Farm

Martha Kataike began farming in 2018. She mainly grows Tomatoes, Onions, and Cabbages. She also rears various birds at her farm including local chicken, turkeys, guinea fowls among others. She employees 10 people of which 6 are full time workers while the other 4 are part time.

### Effects of COVID-19

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, I used to harvest tomatoes worth 2 million Uganda shillings.

However, when COVID 19 broke out in the country, I made a lot of losses, especially during the lock down when government restricted movements. When the opportunity came for me to transport my produce to the market in Butalejja, I struggled with the high transport costs from the farm to the market.

### How I was able to cope

Due to very limited sales, and in some cases none at all, I resorted to using part of my savings to buy inputs, of which for some of

them, the prices had sky rocketed. I also used that money to pay off the workers during lockdown. I also recruited some youth who were in holidays to help in weeding. The heavy rains during this period also made it difficult for me to protect my produce from rotting in the garden.

Despite the challenges we face, and continue to face, I have not stopped to dream. I plan to set up a demonstration garden in the region as a way to influence women and youth into engaging in agriculture. I also plan to upgrade from only supplying the local market in Butalejja to a wider market targeting Busia and Jinja.

I am hoping that I can get to benefit from the Economic stimulus packages that government has provided. The Local Government has called upon people to form 12 groups so as it can provide them with funding. However, majority of the groups have not yet accessed the funds from the local government and yet the reasons are not well stated to them.

Government should also make more effort to furnish us with information, especially the information relating to opportunities for financing for entrepreneurs.



Regina Nakayenga



## RENA Beverage Solutions.

For more than 10 years, Regina Nakayenga has been adding value to agricultural products to make a range of processed goods including Rena Juice and wines like the hibiscus juice and wine, banana wine, passion fruit juice concentrates, Rena teas like the Mpirivuma tea, Okra tea, hibiscus tea and related products all of which also have a medicinal value. During the lock down, Regina embarked on manufacturing handsanitizer, which is her most recent product.

Rena Beverages is a cottage industry which is located Kinawataka in Kampala. The business began in 2010 and was registered officially registered in 2012.

### Effect of COVID 19 on RENA beverages and how we remained resilient

My business was very much affected by COVID 19 pandemic, and most especially the lockdown. In March 2020, when the lock down was announced

and restrictions were introduced, public transport was suspended, schools were closed, public gatherings were prohibited, the cost of doing business increased while the demand for my products like juices, wines, hibiscus leaves for tea, okra tea and mpirivuma tea, fell. For example, access to inputs was also a challenge because of the restrictions that had been put on transport, which made, for instance collection of hibiscus from farmers became more expensive, because of the need to rely on bodaboda services. As a result of reduction in demand, our sales also fell. For instance, while by December 2019, the company had recorded sales of approximately shs. 218 million, by March 2020, the sales had dropped to shs. 8 million only.

COVID-19 and the lock happened at a time when we were getting ready to supply juices, ahead of the end of the month when people have money, but also ahead of the upcoming schools visitation by parents to their children's schools.

When the children were recalled back home instead, we lost out on that market opportunity.

We therefore had to find a quick solution to ensure that we remain in operation. One of the survival tricks that RENA Beverages solutions Ltd embraced was digital marketing.

Through that, some of the juice brands ended upon Jumia, an online shopping platform. Through online marketing, sales increased from 8million in July 2020 to 9 million in August 2020. Apart from Jumia, we also decided to deliver to people's homes and agreed upon places with the help of a boda boda motorist, although this meant that we had to increase the cost of the products.

Besides online marketing, we reduced the number of employees in juice processing and rescheduled our operations, a practice that we have maintained to date.

In addition to the above measures, we have also introduced new products to the list of what were producing, to be able to tap into the budding market that came about due to COVID 19. For example, we started making sanitizer which was approved by the Uganda National Bureau of Standards

(UNBS). We have been able to supply offices with sanitizer, mainly banks like Centenary Bank, pharmacies, as well as NGOs, among others. We also began making tea bags rich in Vitamin C and antioxidants, because with COVID, we realized that people were also more interested in smart products.

After the lock down was eased, I began hearing about the Stimulus package. I have heard about the Emyooga programme but my community couldn't absolve me because they thought my financial needs were much more than theirs, and feared that I would take all the money once it was released to the group.

The truth is that we need big money. The money provided under this programme is very little. For example, the tea bag project requires a tea bag machine. Initially we thought we would have tea bags without strings, but with COVID-19, we need to procure a machine that can produce teabags with strings.

Also, it is generally still hard for women entrepreneurs like myself to access finances from government entities; instead, I have had to rely on support from foreign agencies, on bank loans, and from the business.





**Prisca Tukahirwa**



## **Prisca Tukahirwa -Breakers Butcher**

Prisca Tukahirwa is a butcher lady, a business commonly ventured into by men. But Prisca's resilience and hard work has kept her on top of her game amidst her competitors. Before the outbreak of COVID 19, Prisca was running two butchers in Jinja which were all operating very well.

### **Effects of COVID 19 and the lock down**

"Before the lockdown, I used to sell 30kgs of meat per day, from which I would make a profit of 35,000/= to 50,000/= a day from each of the two butchers. However, due to the effects of the pandemic, I decided to close one of the butchers because I was experiencing a reduction in sales. Since many people had been affected by the lock down, meat was viewed majorly as a luxury for many. So, in addition to closing one of the butchers, I also cut down on the number of kilograms I was selling."

## How I managed to survive

“Though the COVID 19 pandemic disrupted my businesses, I did not give up. In order to remain resilient, I invested in the boda-boda business in order to generate additional income which has helped to keep my butcher operating and has also complimented my income generally. When the restrictions where eased, I began to target hotels and also do door to door deliveries of the meat. I have also been able to increase on the quantity of meat am dealing in, as I look to start supplying other butchers around in Bugembe.”

I have not yet heard about the stimulus packages by government. I have never benefited from any government program for businesses. My biggest challenge has been limited access to information about the packages or programs, and the processes to follow if I want to benefit from them. In order for us to benefit, the Government should simplify the conditions and process of accessing these benefits for our businesses.



**Dorothy Kimuli**



## **D & M International**

Dorothy Kimuli is the proprietor of D & M International, processors of Chili sauce and tomato ketchup. Before the lock down, Kimuli used to supply all parts of the country, majorly through supermarkets as her target customers were middle income earners, because they understand the product and could afford the price.

### **Effects of COVID 19 and the lock down**

When the lock down was imposed in March, the company experienced several challenges including inadequate supply of raw materials, expiry of products due to reduced demand, non-payment from especially certain supermarkets, some of which closed after the lock down was lifted. At that time, I also had a number of loans I had taken out for the business which I was servicing. I temporarily suspended production so that I would focus on selling the available stock given the challenges at hand.

Before the outbreak of COVID 19, each time my team made a round of distribution, we would earn between sh 4 million to 5 million although this had since dropped to three million. Despite the pandemic and the drop in earnings by the company, my target hasn't changed. Unlike other processor who ventured into production of other products so as to earn, I did not have that kind of opportunity and time to make new products.

I believed that since people were struggling, I would probably not be able to sell such a product if I was already struggling to sell one that I have already been making and marketing. "Chili and Ketchup, these are luxury products, bought mainly by people who feel that they love them. So when the situation became tough, many consumers of my product most likely got into their gardens and got the fresh chili.

## My coping strategies to be able to stay in business

In order to cope with the situation, I identified regions where I could easily collect cash and focused on those and avoided those that delayed to pay for the products. From our analysis, we realized that the eastern route was a cash route, that even amidst COVID 19 and the lock down, each time we supplied a product, my team would come back with money.

The other option I ventured into was employment, so that I would get some money that I would plough back into the business. Because of this income, I am able to go into production three times a week. Nonetheless, this financing is not enough, especially given the fact that I cannot devote sufficient time to the business because I have to be at my other job.

While I have heard about the financial packages for businesses like mine, many of the ones I have heard about are not friendly. The only financing, I have been able to receive from government has been through Private Sector Foundation Uganda, where I received financing to set up quality management systems. There is need for proper distribution of existing financial packages, government must understand what the micro, small and medium enterprises need given their nature, size and the dynamics involved for such businesses. Government should also provide capacity building opportunities for entrepreneurs to understand the different financial products and how they can be accessed.



**Justine Ivy Mukazungu**



## **Stina Foods Limited**

Ms. Justine Ivy Mukazungu is the proprietor of Stina Foods Limited located in Mbale. Stina Foods Limited is a food processing enterprise which began as a cottage industry more than 6 years ago. The enterprise processes a wide range of cereals to make baby porridge. These cereals include: Amarantha, Soya, Maize, Corn, Rice, Millet, and Beans. The main customers are hospitals with malnourished and HIV/AIDS patients given the high nutritional value of her product. Stina Foods also supplies a number of supermarkets in Mbale, Jinja, Busia, Gulu and Kampala.

### **Effects of COVID 19**

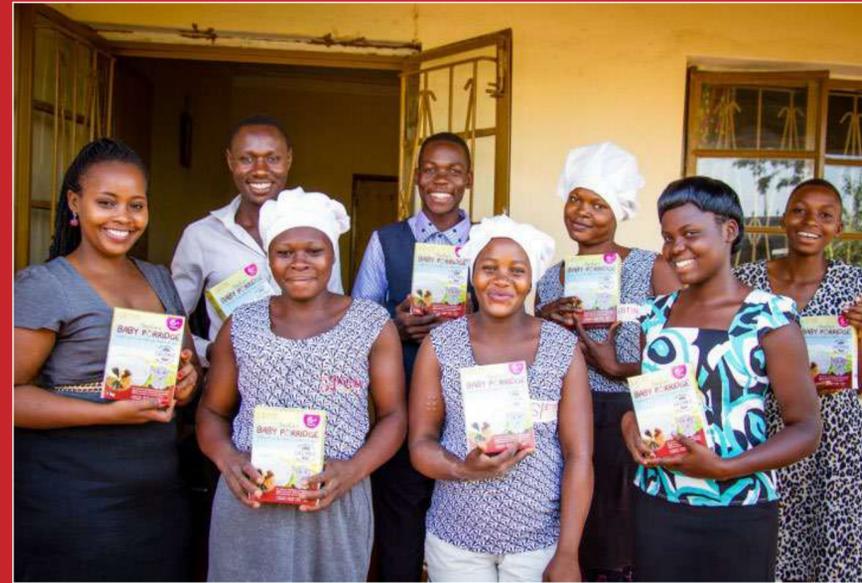
Before the outbreak of COVID-19, I used to earn between about 9 million-12 million Uganda shillings per month from selling about 2000kgs of porridge. However, my sales reduced tremendously when the lock down was imposed. In March 2020 we hardly made any sales. During this period until December 2020, our sales fell to between 4 million-5 million Uganda shillings per month.

Most of our customers reduced because they too had financially been affected by the lock down. Transporting the products to the districts that we supply, such as Busia became very difficult, also given the fact that it was a border district, and movement to it had been restricted. The transport costs doubled. Getting closer to farmers also became costly because we had to invest in the necessary equipment to ensure that we were adhering to the Standard Operating Procedures put in place by the Ministry of Health. Rent also became a burden. With low sales and an expectant land lord, the situation was not easy.

## How we were able to stay in business

In order to overcome the effects, I decided to focus on getting new markets. Fortunately, I had stocked enough packaging materials, so all I needed was to engage in production of the porridge, pack it and supply. I was also fortunate that I was linked to an opportunity to supply refugee camps in Fort Portal. This is where most of my sales came from during this period. I also began making porridge for adult and diversified from making only baby porridge since people were at home and they needed to eat. I opened a stall in Kampala instead of relying on supermarkets. In order to reach the border districts like Busia, which provide a key market opportunity for my porridge, I persisted and reached the border places.

The truth is that it has been a tough season, and so I wish I would benefit from the stimulus package that government has put in place, especially the financing. However, I am biased about government programs because there is a lot of bureaucracy around government finances, and I have never been successful in accessing such financing. Government should differentiate between small businesses and the big ones especially when it comes to designing financing programs for entrepreneurs. Micro and Small sized entrepreneurs should be given more tax exemptions, specific to them, because some of the exemptions in place cut across between the big and small businesses.



Carol Wanyana



## Beauty for Ashes Craft Shop

Carol Wanyana is the proprietor of Beauty for Ashes craft shop. She makes and sells earrings, necklaces, baskets, bangles and other crafts out of old papers. Her main customers were foreign tourists since according to her, the local market has not fully appreciated her products.

### Effects of COVID 19 and the lock down

Following the outbreak of COVID 19 and the government directive for a lock down my sales fell drastically. I used to earn a profit of between 300,000/= to 500,000/= a month. However, ever since the lockdown, my profits dropped mainly due to limited market for my products since my main consumers were foreigners who came in as tourists or expatriates.

This also affected my capital and ability to cover all my other expenses. While in the lock down, I also struggled with balancing between meeting my responsibilities for the family and work.

To cope-up with the effects of the lockdown, I resorted at working from home even after the lock down was eased. While at home, I trained young children in crafts making using papers. This helped her earn some money from the trainings.

I am hoping that at some point I will be able to benefit from some government support designed for entrepreneurs. Government needs to come up with soft conditions for businesses like mine to be able to access government financial support.



Olivia Amudima



## Blessed Events Management

Ms. Olivia Amudima runs a decorating and events business. The business is located in Jinja (Bugembe town). The business plans and decorates functions and hires out different materials and items needed for weddings, introduction ceremonies, baptisms, to mention but a few.

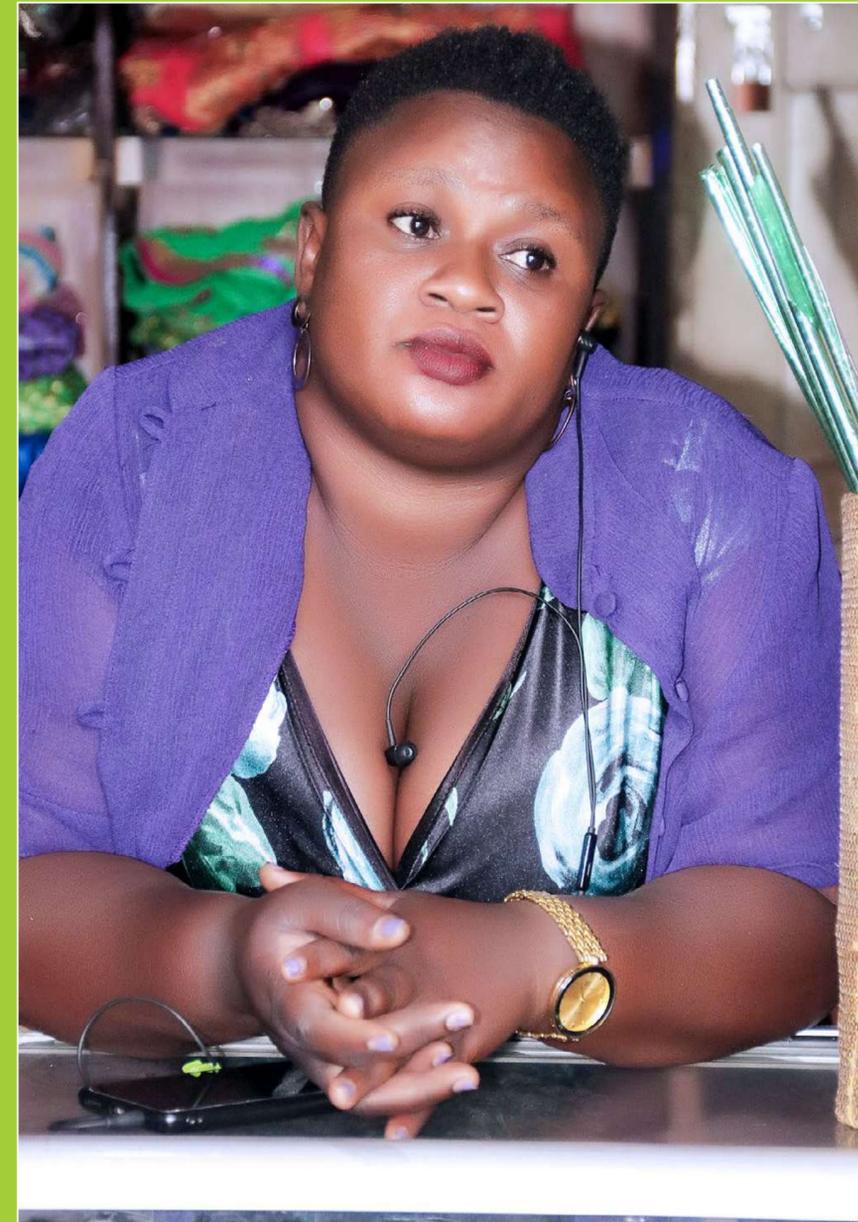
### Effects of COVID 19 and the lock down

“Before the outbreak of the pandemic, we had received many bookings and people had booked for our services and even made deposits. When Government announced a total lockdown, I also closed the shop and went home. However, some clients cancelled their events and demanded for their money to be refunded. However, at the time, their money was not available because I had used it to cover different expenses. Other clients postponed their events to 2021. Since then, things have changed. People are organizing smaller functions now and inviting fewer people, which has affected our earning, given that even when you are giving someone a quotation, you base on the number of guests. The fewer the guests, the lesser the money you can charge.

Despite this, we have also had to deal with rent. Our landlords kept on demanding for rent, even for the months when we were not working. The business was a source of income for my family as well as the families of my business partners. We used to earn a decent amount of money which would enable us to run our families and the business. We struggled to get what to eat. During those five months from March to July, we relied on the savings from the business to sustain our families.”

## How we managed to remain resilient

In order to survive, I started making pancakes at home during the lock down, which I supplied within my neighborhood. For the business, when the lock down ended, I resorted to borrowing from the bank to be able to revive the business. If there some opportunities within government from which I can benefit from, I would be very delighted. I had heard that government will be giving some money to SACCOs. I am part of a SACCO but this money has not yet reached. Government should give us long time loans especially now as we try to revive our businesses. Government should also introduce a committee at local government level within the districts to specifically do research and find out how businesses and people have been affected and what kind of help they need.



## Teopista Kyomuhendo



### Our lady of Charity Women's Group

Teopista Kyomuhendo is the chairperson of Our Lady of Charity Women's Group which has been located in Upper Nsooba, Mulago 3 A, Kawempe Division. The group, which has been in existence for 12 years has 35 members, most of members are former street children, former sex workers, those recovering from drug abuse, and single mothers among others. They collectively manufacture and trade art and crafts. The group makes door mats, bags, and some mixed color fabrics.

The group majorly relies on tourists, hotels, and exhibitions for their market. For example, in 2018, Our lady of Charity Women's group, composed of 35 members took part in the Dar es salaam exhibition during which they earned Tsh12 million, an equivalent of Ush10million. On their return home, part of the money was reinvested in the purchase of inputs, some was saved while the other percentage was distributed to members in the group. Unfortunately, while the group was looking out for more exhibitions, COVID 19 struck.

#### Impact of COVID on the group

The group was very much affected by the pandemic and the actions taken to stop its spread, specifically the lock down and social distancing requirements. Because of this, members have not been able to meet due to limitations in terms of how many people can meet at a time. We used to turn up in large numbers, make our products collectively, and receive buyers at our work place.

However, all this is not possible now. Members are also scared of getting infected, and as such, some people have had to go to the village. We now work in smaller groups, depending on the demand for the products.

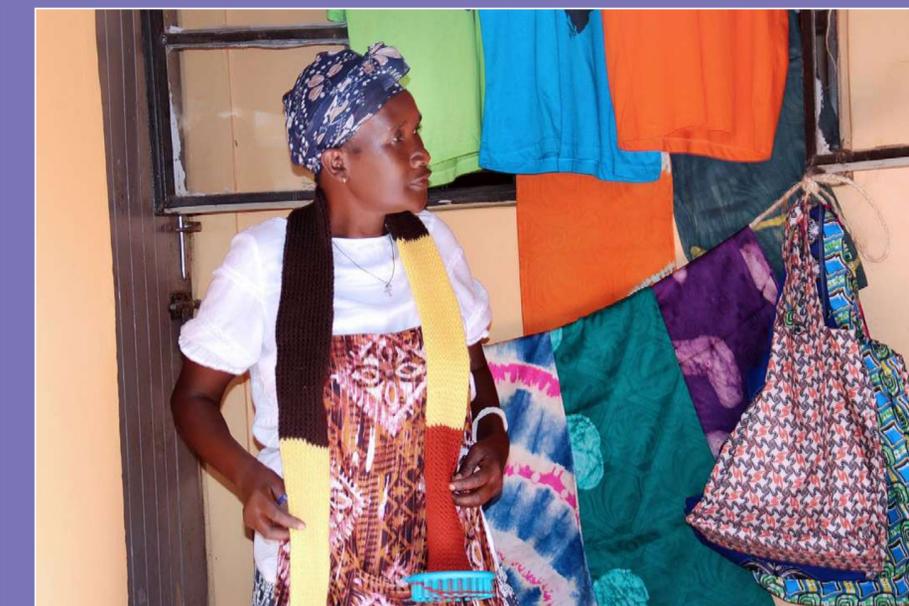
From the sales, we used to earn a profit of 1 million Uganda shillings a month, however, since the pandemic struck, our profit have reduced so much due to reduced demand and lack of market. We especially lost market when the country was temporarily shut down from receiving tourists from the outside world, especially those from Europe and the United

States, and when hotels and schools which mainly bought door mats; and uniforms from us were closed down. In addition to the drop in economic activities within the group, there were cases of domestic violence in homes of some younger members in the group due to reduced finances and lack of food. We had a case of domestic violence, due to lack of food and some basic needs because our member who used to depend on some small income she used to earn from some group activities, was no longer earning. The husband, didn't have a proper source of income, so fights ensued, and the girl ran to us for help. The group leaders intervened by giving the couple food items, and considered the girl among members to work twice a week so as to earn a living. We also brought her on board to be part of the small group making face masks and liquid soap to help her earn some income. With liquid soap production, which takes about 30 minutes, each member would earn shs. 5000 from time to time.

In a week we make three jerricans. We sell the liquid soap in small mineral water bottles, and each goes for sh1000. The product is sold by youth and some women. If they chose to vend the soap, packed in mineral water bottles, they would also earn some commission.

In addition to making masks and liquid soap, the group also ventured into growing mushrooms using existing gardens in the convent. However, the communities did not embrace the mushrooms, so we suspended the mushrooms business and focused on making masks and liquid soap to capture the new market brought by COVID 19. In order to observe social distancing rules, we divided the group into shifts of 8 women per shift for those available to earn some income from liquid soap production and making of masks.

After the lock down, we started hearing about the Emyooga, however, officials at the divisional headquarters are selective, and place many conditions when it comes to choosing beneficiaries. For example, there are conditions like, giving a certain percentage of the money to those who helped us secure the funds, and the same applies to when one secures a loans from government institutions. So accessing these funds is challenging in our view, because in such a circumstance, it is difficult to know how to account for such money.



Aidah Tumuhiirwe



## United Innovations Development Center

Aidah Tumuhiirwe is the proprietor of United Innovations Development Center situated in Kireka. The center makes briquettes from charcoal dust, rubbish from people's homes and molasses. The center that works with young people specifically school drops and women also makes paper bags from banana fibre in addition to briquettes among others.

### COVID 19 at hand

When the pandemic hit the country at the start of March 2020, her business came to a standstill. The main buyers of Tumuhiirwe's products, like schools were asked to close just like any other grouping, forcing many to hold onto their finances, hoping that the virus would go away soon. But the pandemic wasn't about to go, meaning, Tumuhiirwe had to become creative in order to stay in business and survive.



## My resilience story

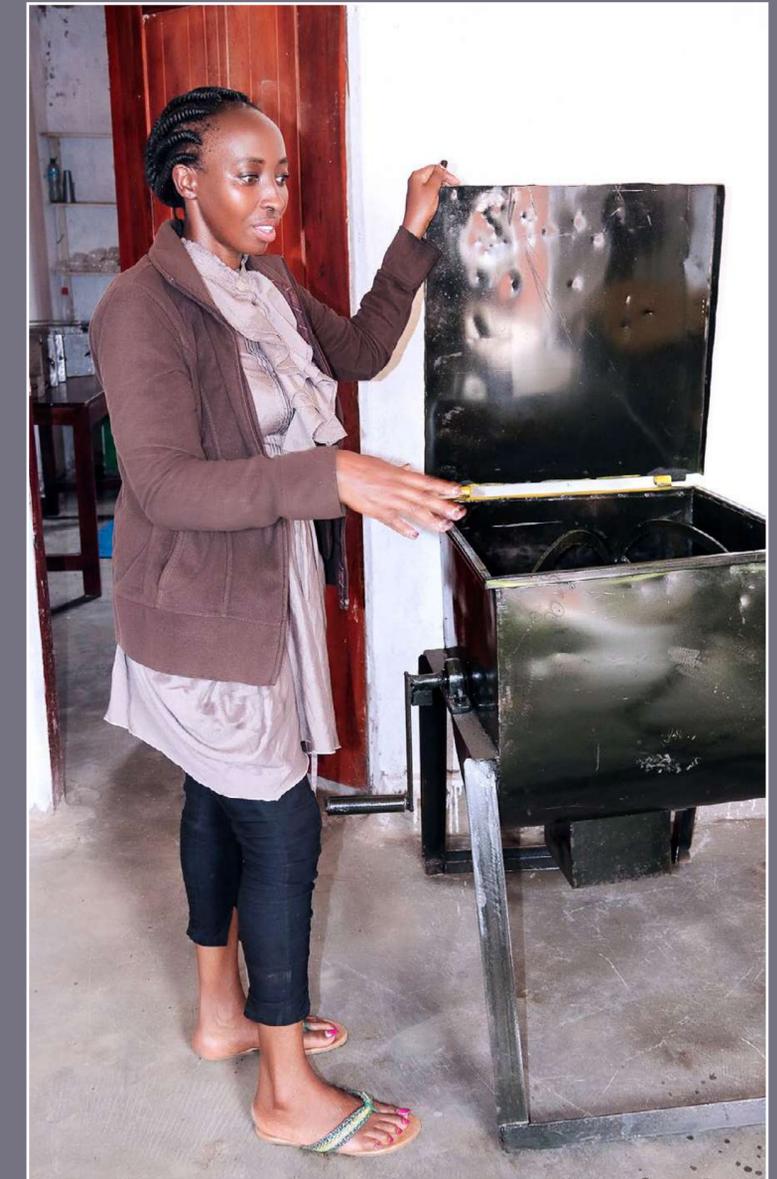
“When the pandemic struck, the market for briquettes was cut off, paper bags that acted mainly as gift bags also lost market, super markets that used to be the main buyers of the paper bags also stopped taking in new stock, and we got stuck,” she explains. Her earnings from the trainees also dropped due to as these too stopped going for trainings due to difficulties in transport. She adds that the biggest sale the business made during the lock down was for only 1000 bags of briquettes, and yet she had acquired a loan which she had to pay back to MSC.

I took a decision to move to a bigger and cheaper space, so as to introduce other projects that would take the investment through the pandemic is under control. That is when I, along with my team, decided to settle for Kululu village in Namugongo, away from the original premises in Kireka. I took a loan from Microfinance Support Center to supplement my savings that I saved

before the outbreak of the pandemic. In Kikulu, rooms that acted as offices and accommodation had already been established, this helped me keep some workers on the site throughout the lockdown, a requirement that had also been made by government.

At the new location, I started growing mushrooms. However, these too didn't attract a good market since my only market was the neighboring community which didn't fully embrace them, so she later abandoned it. I along with a few workers who had remained embarked on making candles in addition to the paper bags and briquettes we had been making. This was later supplemented with the production of chalk when schools resumed for candidates.

I wish I would access some finances from government through some of the programmes I have been hearing about like the Emyooga but these are proving hard to access. Government should come with a fund that provides interest free loans to women entrepreneurs like myself.





**Namakula Harriet**



### **Namakula's shoe shop**

Namakula Harriet makes shoes in Bwaise, a Kampala suburb. She has been making and selling shoes for more than two years. On average she makes a profit of shs. 200,000 per month while on a bad day, she makes as low as shs. 50,000.

### **Effects of COVID 19 and the lock down**

When the lock down was imposed, I closed my business. However, after sometime, I opened it, but even then, I didn't have enough buyers because other people were still under lock down. Before the lock down, I used to source raw materials from the city center. When the lockdown was eased for certain shops, I had no option but to invest more in transport to source for the materials from Katwe, a Kampala suburb.

To do so I have to spend three times the original cost on transport, with the help of a boda boda so as to keep in business throughout the COVID 19 period.

My major customers were students, and parents with school going children who would buy the shoes, and individuals who bring their shoes for repair. But with the closure of schools, my sales remained very low. I used to make shs. 200,000 from shoe making alone.

However, at the moment, I can only earn a total of between sh50,000 to sh70,000, majorly from making repairs. If I make on average 2000 repairs a month I can earn between shs. 50,000 to 70,000 shillings. Since my shoe sales have reduced, my target has been to make about 5000 repairs so that I can earn more money to pay for my rent and also be able to plough back some money into the business.

## My coping mechanism

While I was looking out for options to increase my income, there emerged the need for face masks. Using the little resources, I had saved, I bought some materials and started making masks which I would sell to the supermarkets around. However, this was short lived after I learnt from the supermarket owners that UNBS had informed them that my masks were not meeting the set standards.

Coping with impact of the pandemic has not been an easy task. This is why, I think the government must come in and lend us a hand. I have heard about several economic stimulus packages that government has proposed, including Emyooga. I was advised to join a group if I want to access this financing. However, this is still hard given the fact that each member in the group has got different financial needs, some of which cannot be met, even half way, by the little money offered by the program. Even ongoing entrepreneurship programs like the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Fund under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development has also become very difficult to access due to the many bureaucracies.

If women entrepreneurs like myself are to benefit from government financial packages, they should be interest free. Such financing will also save us from the hands of money lenders who not only offer little money for very high value collateral, but also demand very high interest. I also propose a reduction in taxes and licenses on businesses especially amidst this situation to allow us to be able to reorganize our businesses.



Barbara Catherine Nabitimpa



## FLOBA African Wear

Barbara Catherine Nabitimpa runs a tailoring and fashion business located in Ntinda, which deals in tailoring of casual, formal and party wear for both men and women, necklaces, bangles, bags, shoes, with an Africa touch. Her major target market is individuals purchasing clothes to attend weddings and introduction ceremonies, girls' day outings, clubbing, fashion shows, baby and bridal showers, among others. However, all the above gatherings are either no more or have become less popular.

### Effects of COVID 19

Before the outbreak of COVID 19 in March and the country wide lock down for almost five months, I used to earn shs. 2 million monthly from her tailoring and fashion business.

However, after the lock down, it has become very hard to make even shs. 500,000 a month. Every shilling I earn, I use it to clear arrears like rent, suppliers who had supplied raw materials among others.

The reduction in sales is because when COVID 19 struck and government imposed the different restrictions, the number people that attended functions reduced tremendously. For instance, during the lock down, only 5-10 people were allowed to attend a function. People were not buying clothes, because, even the cameras were fewer and less exciting. When the lock down was eased, certain entertainment related functions like clubbing, fashion shows, baby and bridal showers have either remained banned or limited to a very small number, hence there is generally a slow rise in the market. This is also because such gatherings are still considered illegal and dangerous, as these are said to be ways through which the COVID 19 can spread.

Like many other businesses, I have failed to recover my client base. In order to try and grow back my market base, but also take advantage of the opportunities brought by COVID 19, I resorted to making designer face masks, made from African pieces like Kitenge. These helped to secure some income for me because much as people were not interested in clothing, they still wanted to look smart with a good looking mask. Some people even began to order for dresses and shirts and match them with a mask of similar or matching fabric/ colors.

I have also made use of different digital platforms where I advertise my pieces. For example, I have used social media channels like Facebook where I leave my telephone number for customers to get in touch. Interested buyers have been calling and I had their items delivered to them.

My biggest challenge at the moment is that I am in a financial crisis. The sales have not yet picked up very well and yet I pay for rent and other expenses including adverts for my products through the available channels. I have heard that there are some government programs to help entrepreneurs like myself, however, there is no proper information regarding the financial packages targeting people in a business like mine. If there is something that government has put out, they should put it out clearly through all kinds of channels to ensure that it is publicly known. We need business grants and interest free loans from government without conditions that make it impossible for us to access the money.



**Priscilla Ojambo**



## Tripple TEE Adventures

Priscilla Ojambo is the owner of Triple Tee Adventures Limited. Ojambo, who has been in the tourism business since 2015, was operating from rented premises in town, and her target market were Chinese. According to Ojambo, Chinese travel in large numbers, and stay longer hence leaving behind more cash for tour operators.

After earning from her new found market and was busy organizing for other groups, COVID 19 pandemic emerged, moreover from the country of her preferred customers, China.

## Impact of COVID on Tripple Tee

My business was severely affected because tourism as a sector depends on international or foreign clients through travels. Bookings were cancelled; cars were packed and are still packed.

There is no business yet, I don't know what the future holds and we don't know when things will be better. Before the outbreak of the virus, I used to earn from tourists and from non-government organizations which would hire vehicles to go to the field. While the vehicles were not working and I was not making use of the office premises, the land lord continued to demand for rent.

The garages where the vehicles had been packed also demanded for their parking fees. Aside from this, I also struggled with anxiety and depression for my son who was in China.

## Coping with the situation/ Resilience

Although the previous location in Kampala was strategic, I had to move to our unfinished building where I have now set up an office in Namusera Village, in Wakiso Town council, found along Hoima road. This has helped us to cut down on the parking fees for the cars which are no longer in much use.

I want to tap into local tourism but also take advantage of Hoima road and provide descent accommodation, targeting tourists and expatriates who will be heading in that direction.

I have also embarked on developing products to serve the interests of the domestic tourists, one of which includes making the facilities cheaper so as not to give people ideas that tourism can only be afforded by foreigners.

Government support, however is imperative through the provision of the economic stimulus packages. I have never come across any financial support for women led businesses by government. She however is preparing herself for domestic tourism until a time when foreign tourists will resume coming into the country.

While I have heard of the government program of Emyooga for entrepreneurs, there hasn't been any official communication sent to explain to us about the entire project, and how a business like mine can benefit from this program.



**Nakitto Janet**



## **Mulungi Confectionery**

Nakitto Janet, the proprietor of Mulungi Confectionery in Seeta, has been in this business for four years, after quitting her nursing profession. To get the raw materials for her products, she uses funds sourced from her clients. Nakitto bakes cakes for birthday parties, weddings, and introductions. She also makes doughnuts, daddies and snacks which she supplies to schools and parents with school going children. She also runs a training facility where she teaches young men and women how to bake. On a good day, Nakitto has the potential to bake, for example, a wedding cake worth 1 million Uganda shillings, with the smallest going for sh500,000. In a month, from cakes alone, Nakitto can make 5million Uganda shillings. However, from the start of March 2020, Nakito has never enjoyed the earnings listed above, due to the outbreak of COVID 19. With the outbreak, major gatherings that were the main markets for people like her were banned.

### **Impact of COVID 19**

When weddings were restricted to scientific weddings, with about only five people in attendance, and other parties that required a cake to spice up the event were banned, we lost our major sources of income. The situation had already been made worse by the closure of schools where I used to supply snacks. Even now, with the situation slightly improving, there are fewer people attending weddings, which means the sizes of cakes being ordered by our clients have also reduced. Since our clients were also affected financially, and as a result, many of them are also not willing to pay the prices we initially charged. We have thus had to reduce the prices in order to continue making some small sales despite the fact that the cost of ingredients has remained the same. For example, we had to reduce the cost of a cake that used to cost 1 million Uganda shillings, to only 500,000 Uganda shillings.

## My Coping Mechanism:

In March, which was the time the lock down started, she had secured orders worth 5 million Uganda shillings, and even baked some of the wedding cakes which were only waiting to be delivered, only for all functions to be called off. While I was anticipating for the lock down to be eased so that business would get back to normal and the functions would happen, the lock down continued for four months. All this time, I wasn't in business, but the land lord continued to demand for rent. In order to survive, and be able to pay the rent and other expenses, I had to use some of my savings. I also concentrated on expanding the bakery training for young people, which brought in some little money. I discussed the training fees on a one on one basis in order to attract and retain the trainees, depending on the bakery section one was interested in. I have also included other training opportunities such as making door mats for those who may not be interested in baking. This is also because, door mats are also on demand of late. As a member of the Uganda Small Scale Industries

Association (USSIA), I was also able to connect with some other members from whom I collect crafts, sandals, shoes, bags, and necklaces at a reduced price, and sell them to earn an extra income. I have struggled to survive, it has not been easy, and so I am hoping that government can come to our rescue. I have heard about the stimulus package, but mainly about the financial packages in form of loans. However, amidst the current situation, it would be suicidal for me to go for a loan because there are no enough sales in the business to help her pay back the loan. What I need is an interest free loan which allows for a longer repayment period. That way we can use the money, get some profit then pay it back. Government should also intervene in the issue of monthly licenses which the local councils have continued to demand even amidst this situation.



Esther Nagujja Kakooza



## Johnes Training Institute

Esther Nagujja Kakooza who has been working in the education sector for the last 15 years first worked at Datamine Technical Business School and later at Uganda Christian University (UCU) where she saved enough to realize her dream of setting up a Vocational training Institute. Johnes Training Institute is located in Namugongo around Goma Division headquarters. It offers hands on certificate courses such as tailoring, motor vehicle mechanics, hotel and institutional catering, electrical installations and maintenance, plumbing, among others.

### How the school was affected by COVID 19

Just like any other sector, vocational institutes were severely affected because students were sent home and schools were closed. And since teachers depend on earnings from the school fees, many of them had to stay at home without a steady source of income. The students at the institution are partially sponsored students. Thus, without school fees coming in, either from the students or from the sponsors, maintaining staff and other development projects became impossible.

#### Innovation to survive the lock down:

In order to survive, we had to become innovative. I mobilized some female teachers and a few women in the area, including final year students and we started making sanitizer. I sought the services of a trainer, who trained us team in the entire process of making sanitizer before we embarked on mass production.

After the training, when we started production, we applied for certification from the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS). We however were unable to complete the certification process because of lack of finances. Fortunately, I was able to

obtain support from my husband who offered us his salary, and the product was finally certified. In order to penetrate the market, we decided to go for the market in northern Uganda which have less competition. When the sanitizer business succeeded, we embarked on production of masks which were also certified by UNBS. With the two projects, we were able to bring on board more teachers and students which gave them an opportunity not to be idle but also earn some money for survival.

Although the institute seems to be coping with the situation, we need funds to clear outstanding expenses. The institute is financially constrained especially given that teachers are still demanding salaries in addition to securing materials for when schools fully resume. Because of absence of funds, a number of development projects have been put on hold. For instance, the construction of a civil engineering training center has been put on hold until funds are secured.

I have tried to access governments financial support but with no success. The only benefits we have received at the moment have been through USSIA that has been offering trainings on how to sail through situations like COVID 19.



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